



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food Safety  
and Inspection  
Service

Washington, D.C.  
20250

OCT 29 2002

Mr. Greg Read  
Executive Manager, Exports and Food Policy  
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)  
Edmund Barton Building  
GPO Box 858  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Australia

Dear Mr. Read:

Enclosed is a copy of the final report of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) February 27 through March 28, 2002, audit of Australia's meat inspection system. We recently received your August 21, 2002, letter regarding comments on the draft final report of the same audit. We have incorporated this letter into the final report as Attachment "G."

During this audit, the FSIS auditor reported several concerns about the Australian meat inspection system including product contamination and inadequate implementation of Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system. In reviewing your August 21 letter and attached AQIS notices that were circulated to the Australian exporting establishments, FSIS acknowledges the actions taken by the Australian government to correct and prevent future occurrences of these deficiencies. These actions, combined with your May 8, 2002, response concerning corrective actions taken at several exporting establishments cited with "30-day" letters for inadequate HACCP implementation, give FSIS confidence that AQIS is committed to maintaining an equivalent meat inspection system.

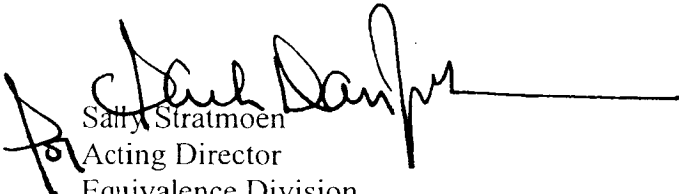
In regard to the AQIS postmortem inspection procedure of not incising the lymph nodes of the heads of cattle raised and slaughtered in the state of Tasmania, we have carefully considered your proposal to continue this practice while your agency prepares a position paper demonstrating how the alternative sanitary measure of not incising lymph nodes would continually provide the same level of public health protection as is provided in the U.S. meat inspection system. However, we must decline your proposal and request that AQIS immediately commence with the incision and examination of the parotid, retropharyngeal, and submaxillary lymph nodes of the heads of all cattle slaughtered from which meat is obtained for export to the United States.

It is our understanding that AQIS' rationale for not incising the lymph nodes is an assertion that Tasmania is biologically free of bovine tuberculosis (TB). Your equivalence proposal should provide scientific documentation of that claim and evidence that not incising the lymph nodes poses no risk of failure to detect other bovine pathological conditions that would, under FSIS postmortem inspection standards, result in condemnation for use as human food.

Notwithstanding our current stance in the U.S. meat inspection system to incise the lymph nodes as part of our routine postmortem inspection of cattle, FSIS will thoroughly consider AQIS' scientific position of an alternative postmortem inspection procedure regarding the inspection of heads. FSIS is committed to expedite the equivalence review upon receiving AQIS' position paper.

If I can provide you further assistance regarding the FSIS audit or other matters discussed in this letter, please contact me at telephone number 202-720-3781, facsimile number 202-690-4040, or email address ([sally.stratmoen@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:sally.stratmoen@fsis.usda.gov)).

Sincerely,

  
Sally Stratmoen  
Acting Director  
Equivalence Division  
Office of International Affairs

Enclosure

Mr. Greg Read

cc: Philip Corrigan, Agr. Counselor, Embassy of Australia, Wash. DC  
Andrew C. Burst, Counselor, American Embassy, Canberra  
Amy Winton, State Department  
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Country File (Australia Audit File - FY 2002)